

ESSAY  
UPON  
THE QUESTION,  
IS MEDICAL SCIENCE  
FAVOURABLE  
TO SCEPTICISM?

---

BY JAMES W. DALE, M.D.  
OF NEWCASTLE, DELAWARE.

---

PHILADELPHIA:  
HASWELL, BARRINGTON, AND HASWELL.  
1839.



## GENERAL COURSE OF ARGUMENT.

---

Other departments of science have been erroneously regarded as hostile to revelation.

What is medical science ?

Truths taught by it directly and inferentially.

Accordance with correspondent truths of revelation.

Bearing of medicine on truths peculiar to revelation.

Practical precepts of medicine.

Probable source of scepticism among medical men, and basis of popular opinion.

Facts which forbid the divorce of medical science and religion.



## ESSAY, ETC.\*

---

IN some of the Lectures to which I have listened, allusion has been made to an opinion, as one entertained by the community, that scepticism in religious matters prevails in the medical profession.

To know the basis of such an opinion we all are interested.

Coming to the study of medicine, myself, with an unwavering belief in the divine origin of Christianity, and having felt, as this science was progressively unfolded before me, new and powerful confirmation of this truth, I have been led with some surprise to inquire whence an opposite opinion could arise. That the science of medicine truly interpreted affords no just foundation for it, my mind is fully convinced. All truths must harmonize. The truths of religion and medicine, therefore, cannot be discordant. This bare assertion, however, may not be deemed sufficient: and to give a more extended reply, may seem the adoption of an unwonted theme for a medical thesis. But is it inappropriate? Believing that it will not be so judged, allow me to introduce for investigation the inquiry, "IS MEDICAL SCIENCE FAVOURABLE TO SCEPTICISM?"

It has been the lot of Christianity to meet assaults from every quarter. The surprise which might naturally arise from such a fact is repressed, when we remember the proud character of man and the high claims of revealed religion. To wound what is declared invulnerable,—to exhibit stains on what is proclaimed spotless,—to silence the voice loudest in his condemnation, afford incentives to exertion that will deeply move every proud mind. To accomplish these ends what weapon has not in its turn been vainly tried? Medicine is not peculiar in having been wielded against religion, or in being supposed by its essential character

\* This Essay was presented and accepted for the degree of Doctor of Medicine, in the University of Pennsylvania.—We are more immediately indebted to the kindness of Professor Hodge, for its being placed in our hands for publication.—*Ed. Select Med. Lib.*



opposed to this latter. *All* science has been declared to hold the same position. It was so asserted when Christianity in her pureness and sublime simplicity first arose upon the world. The eye of science unfamiliar with the heavenly brilliance of revealed truth, was dazzled to blindness. The science of Greece and Rome, being declared by revelation to be "Science falsely so called," "the Greeks" in turn pronounced religion "foolishness." Time, that impartial adjudicator, has long since determined which spoke truth. Subsequently to this, when the brightness of revealed truth was sadly tarnished by the handling of men, what little science shone in the schools was, almost by common consent, regarded as warring against religion.

Another era commenced with that period when science learned to draw her light from the bright treasures of nature and of fact; and when, also, the advocates of religion were content, in unfolding the Scriptures, themselves to stand back, while the unclouded truths of revelation shone forth. — Since this golden age began, science and Christianity have steadily approached each other. So evident has been this onward course of approximation, that now the firmest advocates of revealed religion, and the most favoured cultivators of science, in approaching by their several paths a barrier through which the commingling rays of religion and science have not yet pierced, no longer regard each other as enemies, but stretch forth their hands through the cloudy barrier in friendly greeting, and only await its dissipation to unite in closer embrace.

Such result attending the advance of the day of intellect assures us, that, though deep have been the shadows formed by the rays of science falling on religion, yet when science shall have attained her zenith, and shall shed her beams no more aslant upon religion, there will be no shadow formed. Proof will thus be afforded, that the darkness was due not to the character of religion, but to the manner in which light fell upon her.

While science in general has been regarded as inimical to religion, especial reference is made to particular departments. Among these have been enumerated Astronomy, Geology, Chronology, as well as Medical Science. Since the days of Newton, we surely may dismiss the charge of astronomy being hostile to revelation.

He read the volume, which claims an inspired origin, in light gathered from every star and sun and sphere; and in the light of every orb concentrated on it, set his seal to the high claim as true.

There is more therefore than poetry in the declaration—

“An undevout astronomer is mad.”

Geology has been made to occupy a similar position. Though the advocate of religion were unable, at present, to go side by side with the geologist in all his researches, and prove it still a truth, that “no weapon formed against her can prosper,” there would be no ground for triumph. With evident propriety, all controversy on this subject might be declined until the foundations of this science are uncovered and made stable. Till then, who can justly complain if religion slights the call to prove her divinity, by descending into the bowels of the earth, and walking unharmed amid the toppling wrecks of other worlds, or sporting unscathed with the giant jaws of disentombed Megalosauri. Chronology has been associated with the sceptical in their war against religion; but only as an “impressed” recruit.

The monuments of Egypt, the shasters of India, and the unknown records of China, were long vauntingly regarded, though dumb, yet triumphant witnesses against religion. Egypt is no longer speechless. Champollion has put a tongue into her dumb-mouthed porphyry. The quickening rays of science have fallen on her cold monuments, as the sun on fabled Memnon, and they have spoken! What is the result? confusion in the ranks of scepticism, and another triumph to religion. In like manner India's records brought to the light, and unfolded, have ceased to be the appeal of scepticism. Guided by all experience, we may tranquilly await the unfolding of Chinese records; not fearing, that the bright ensign of revelation will be lowered before the dark standard of scepticism. Like those of India they will be found either all a fable, or truths made portentous only when encircled by a cloudy mist—the offspring of a warm eastern imagination.

Having thus introduced our subject, by a brief reference to erroneous opinions entertained of the bearing of several particular departments, as well as of science in general, on religion, we come now with cheerful confidence to the inquiry already stated: “Is Medical Science favourable to Scepticism?”

To observe, in general, the sphere and character of this science, is evidently appropriate to our purpose. Medicine, like all other sciences, was once in its infancy. Its truths were scattered



through the world in individual experience. The evanescent records of tradition, or the locally beneficial Tablets of the Temple, were long their only depositories. There were no principles to guide; causes and effects were little understood; remedies were given with a hand stretched forth in the dark; beneficial results were due to the fortunate suggestions of ignorance, rather than to the dictates of enlightened wisdom.

This period has, however, long since passed away. Medicine of that day and the present bear to each other no more analogy, than the branching tree laden with mature fruit to the shapeless germinating seed. Medicine, with conscious dignity, now seeks, and by unanimous consent occupies, a high position among the sister sciences. It has been tauntingly urged that her truths have no rigid inflexibility.

When we chide the sun-beam for crookedness, because it accommodates itself to different media through which it passes, then may we medicine for the flexibility of her truths. Man and the agents acting on him, are as changeful as the laws of the triangle, the square, and the circle are changeless. Influences which, under the plastic power of a well tutored mind, can be moulded to meet this protean character, are of inestimable worth. To thrust into them the rigid laws of mathematics, would be as desirable as the ankylosis of every joint to remedy want of grace in movement. The legitimate boundaries of medical truth vie with those of any other science. Earth, air, and sea are held in its embrace. None can call the student of medicine an intruder, whether he descend into the earth to analyse its varied constituents, or walk through every clime to gather fruit from tree and shrub and flower, "for the healing of the nations." Equal right has he to the healthful breeze that sweeps the swelling face of ocean, to bathe in its flood, or float upon its bosom. His passport bears him through the changeful winds and clouds of heaven; and bids him ponder the influence of sun and moon upon his chosen study.

To these ennobling spheres of research the medical student is introduced, and privileged to tread, as well as the wards of the hospital and the chamber of domestic sickness. While labours like these give exercise to intellect of the most searching and grasping powers, the framing a shield from their results whereby to guard the hearts of men from the poignant darts of disease, employs the best affections of the soul. That a science like this should be hostile to



religion, even by repute, we might well regret : if between them can be shown to subsist the most friendly and warm hearted alliance, we may hail it with correspondent pleasure. We believe the latter can be done. Let us, to this end, regard some truths which are directly taught by medicine, and others which are necessary deductions from them.

The existence of a supreme Being, a truth all important, and involved in our subject, would naturally receive man's earliest consideration. The successful practice of medicine leads us to this truth. Our idea and argument may be illustrated by a case in point, taken from sacred history.

A man of Lystra, lame from his birth, was cured of his infirmity by Paul and Barnabas. The people who witnessed the cure at once exclaimed, "*The gods* have come down to us in the likeness of men." The one "they called Mercurius, the other Jupiter." Such a scene, in effect, has been witnessed by almost every practitioner.

When the accomplished physician enters the chamber of sickness, with what feelings of dependence is he received by its inmates; how admiringly do they gaze on his eye, radiant with bright beaming intellect and mellowed by sympathising feeling, as it turns towards the couch of suffering. Wonder, imperfectly disguised, is manifest at the silent intercourse held with the throbbing pulse. The opening of his lips to interpret this mysterious converse is waited for as the unsealing of an oracle. When from the vast stores at his command some potent ally is summoned forth, and the contest, long waged doubtfully, between the forces of disease and life is ended; disease driven from the field, and the ruddy ensign of health unfurled, the potent agent in this great work is hailed, — "A god." That such reasoning is in principle bad we do not believe. The error consists in applying the conclusion. Were the physician the independent, *originating* source of such influence, he would be "a god." Conscious, however, that he is not, he rejects such Lystran applause, and declares that his power is derived from the assiduous study of the human frame; the effects produced upon it by chilling blasts and sluggish heat; the clouded heavens or cloudless sun; the healthful atmosphere or noxious exhalation; wholesome food and noxious fruits; poisonous beverage or draughts from the crystal stream; invigorating exercise and refreshing slumber. In such studies he is the disciple of Him who is the maker of our frame, and the creator of the earth and its fruits, the air and its changes, the sun and its warmth, the water and its health. By facts he

teaches their healthful or hurtful agencies on man. To Him, therefore, as the original source of the physician's skill, should the eye of those be directed who are brought back from the gates of death, and before him only their knee be bended. If this be not the dictate of medicine, then the patient healed must bow down to the wisdom and goodness of the physician, while the practitioner worships his drugs and simples, the instruments of his power.

*Chemistry* is remotely a branch of medical science. A favourite stand of infidelity has been beside the crucible, battery, and retort. Successful experimenters have been lauded to the skies. An eager eye has been turned to each new discovery as though it would unsettle the universal throne and uprear a laboratory in its room. Scepticism may, unchidden, laud the chemist for his developments. In doing so she plays a suicidal part. If the researches of chemistry prove mighty intellect and demand our homage, what shall we think of those works which give chemistry employment, and the reflection of whose excellence is all that she can boast? Is it so wise and excellent to lift the veil from these things, that the world shakes with admiring plaudits, while to originate them is neither one nor the other? We cannot but think it would be more meet, if praise were rendered on the ground that all of beauty, order, and law, were not thrown into chaotic confusion. The pathway of chemistry has been lighted hitherto by the bright glittering of truth dashed in pieces of set purpose or while groping in the dark. Rapid as has been the advance of this department, the time is yet to come when it shall hold forth to the admiration of the world more sublime and glorious truths than those which still lie beneath her feet. While this should be regarded by none as a disparagement to chemistry, it should be a barrier to that turbid flood of feeling that would gush forth and bear it beyond the skies.

Chemistry, therefore, as a department of medicine, while enstamping greatness and wisdom on its cultivators, sets her seal to the truth, that there is One greater and wiser than they.

The therapeutical student, who returns laden with precious stores gathered from every clime—of flower, leaf, bark, root, metal, earth—accumulates testimony to the truth that "there is a God." The anatomist pursuing his investigation of that structure "fearfully and wonderfully made," announces as the result of his labors, that "there is a God." The basis of this last declaration is the *intelligent design* everywhere manifest.



The traveller who visits an Antiparos may delight in tracing resemblances to trees, and pillars, and statues, but never thinks to ask "for what *design* was this shapeless mass, or that huge stalactite created?" The beaver's dwelling excites our admiration at the many things which instinct has done so well; but we feel that to inquire, with criticism, "Why such materials were used, why built of such a shape, why this stick is here, that there, would be all out of place." But entering the dwelling of intelligent man, we feel a right to ask, "Why this width, that height, such form, this arch, that door, yon vault, that spring." For every thing we feel there should be a design. Why? The builder is intelligent.

Guided by reasoning like this, when in a structure most complicated we find a thousand things stamped with intelligent design, and wonderfully fulfilling their end, is not the conclusion unavoidable, that it is the workmanship of an intelligent agent? Such a structure the anatomist pronounces the human frame to be, and such his conclusion from his investigation.

But we are not merely taught that there is a supreme Being, we are furnished with proof that there is but *one*. *Diversity* is the atlas pillar that supports the notion of a pluralism of gods. Knowledge derived from chemistry, destroys forever the argument built on this foundation. By this department we are not merely taught, that the ultimate elements of all things are few, but that these elements commingle harmoniously together, to form objects apparently the most diverse. Earth, air, fire, and water, the great opposing elements, and sovereign realms of other days, are now resolvable into the same constituents!

If there be many deities, their thrones must be reared on the elemental principles; established over alumen, nitrogen, hydrogen, and oxygen! But to enthrone a deity over each element, would be rearing, indeed, "*imperium in imperiis*." Each sceptre must be stretched in clashing rule over the realm of its brother god, or there must be such amazing consent in the exercise of sovereign power, as would swallow up individuality, and give us unity; that is proof there is "but one God" ruling over nature and man. We say man, because chemistry farther informs us that the frame of man, according to Scripture declaration, is "made of the dust of the earth," of like material with the things around us.

That God is the creator of man, is taught by this science. Man could not create himself; man could not create his fellow man, are propositions which need no proof. Medicine teaches



that he could not originate with unintelligent matter; as solar heat, galvanic power, &c., for it is a medical law, that not the meanest animate existence can spring from such a cause. What original then remains for man? none other than that Supreme Intelligence already proved to be—God is the preserver of man. Medicine emphatically teaches, indeed rests on the truth, that “Man has not life in himself.” Who is his preserver? He is evidently dependant on the things around him. Who is their sustainer? as we have already seen—God. We conclude, therefore, that man is dependant on, and sustained by God.

We are farther taught by [medical science, that the Supreme Being is possessed of wisdom, power, and goodness, in the highest degree.

This truth may be comprehensively shown by regarding man as the workmanship of God, and in imagination assembling together the monuments of genius wrought by him in all ages of the world. Gazing on this vast collection of *chefs d'œuvre* from his chisel, his pencil, and his pen, can we but admire the boundless riches of wisdom, and power, and goodness displayed by the Creator in the endowment of his creature!

In examining the structure of man in its several parts, we shall find these high attributes farther displayed.

The *osseous system* is the substratum of the human frame; without this it would be a shapeless mass; with it, continuous, it would be a motionless mass. But instead of one, it is composed of more than two hundred pieces. Where not continuous, what polished joints! how wise the cartilaginous extremity! how admirable the synovia! how perfect the ligamentous band, and enclosing capsule! what fitness in the structure of the arm! what wisdom in the hand! everywhere how admirably attained is strength without weight, and lightness without brittleness. The *circulatory apparatus* displays like characteristics. The action of the heart is essential to life. What “power and goodness” that contrived a structure ceaseless in movement, unwearied in duty, and acting unprompted by the will! What perfection in the valves; how just the muscular force! The motion of the joints is met by the flexibility of the canals: to each organ is transmitted nicely sufficient provision. How extended and amazingly minute the capillary system! When the blood has imparted life at its own expense, it is poured in reverted current into the lungs, to be revived and fitted again to enter on its round of duty.

The *nervous system* is, indeed, marked by inscrutable wisdom. In apparently a similar structure, the widely differing phenomena of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and motion, are developed. How admirable the delicacy, rapidity, and power with which these offices are executed! Without the nervous system our body would be our sepulchre. With it we are placed in communion with the earth and the heavens. The beautiful landscape is spread out before us; while above we gaze on the sun in his solitary splendour, or the firmament decked in the jeweled robes of night.

It is the key that unlocks the great receptacle of knowledge in man, and opens to the inner temple in which his spirit of hides itself.

The *organs of nutrition*, by inimitable processes of elaboration, meet the unceasing demand upon them. Food, introduced into the mouth, is changed under the action of the teeth and salivary glands, the stomach and its fluids, bile, and pancreatic juice, till introduced as chyle into the lymphatics. Subsequently, by a final, unknown process, it is converted into blood; poured into the heart, and in countless nutritious streams it is thence diffused, bearing to each organ what its structure and office demand. How extended and complicated, yet how harmonious and perfect the process of nutrition.

We might speak of other structures and processes of the human frame, but it cannot be necessary.

In the preceding remarks special reference has been had to the display of "wisdom." "Power and goodness" are, however, so intimately blended with wisdom, that little independent proof of their existence can be necessary.

It is a proverbial maxim that "knowledge is power." We have seen it manifest in the human structure to measureless extent: our consequent belief is, that its Former has also illimitable power.

Goodness is displayed in the universal perfection; in the peculiar defence of vital organs; in the broad avenue, for the flow of happiness, through sight, hearing, smell, taste, sensibility, and all the necessary functions of life. Pain and disease are indeed experienced, but their origin is traceable not to the Creator but to the infringement of some law of our system. Reflecting that each throb of our heart might have been a pang, each breath a pain, each vibration on the ear a shock, each ray of light a piercing dart, and then remembering what these things are in fact, who can deny "goodness" to their Author?

The truths thus far considered we regard as sustained by direct proof from medical science. There are other truths inferential from these not to be forgotten in the present inquiry. Among these we enumerate the following—

Man owes to God (his creator and preserver) obedience, love, and adoration.

The neglect of these duties is a moral wrong.

These duties are knowingly, continually, and universally neglected.

All mankind stand guilty before God.

That these are legitimate deductions from truths *directly* proved, might readily be shown, were it expedient so to do.

Having now ascertained some important truths, taught directly or indirectly by medical science, we continue our inquiry by an examination of their bearing on revealed religion.

Revelation teaches the existence of one God; the creator and preserver of men; supreme in wisdom, goodness, and power. It also teaches the duties of obedience, love, and worship, pronounces their neglect sinful, declares as a fact that men are thus neglectful; and, as a consequence, guilty before God.

Thus far, therefore, the utmost accordance subsists between medicine and religion.

There are, however, truths peculiar to revelation. It may be asked, Is not medical science opposed to some of these? We answer; Medicine as a peculiar science has no bearing on some of these truths; on others, too remote to claim consideration here. But, in reference to a few others it may be well to consider, with brevity, their mutual bearing on each other.

Atonement for sin by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, is a fundamental doctrine of revealed religion. The fact of the death of the Saviour of mankind has been denied on medical grounds.

The endeavour has been made to show that he was taken from the cross in a state of asphyxia.

It is said that persons crucified live three or even nine days; that Pilate would not believe that our Saviour could have expired so soon; that nothing is more probable than that fatigue, mental anguish, and loss of blood, should have produced exhaustion, syncope or trance; that in this state he was given to faithful friends who medicate his wounds with spices, and leave him to repose in a quiet and well sheltered sepulchral chamber, where he soon recovers, and returns to his friends. It is farther said, that the



Greek verb, *nuttein*, signifies "to wound superficially." Thus it is alleged nothing occurs to account for death.

Distinguished medical men have not been wanting to give a full reply to this reasoning, and to vindicate the Scripture narrative.

The following is condensed from *Richter, Gruner and Eschenback*. "The torments of crucifixion were fearful, not merely from the wounds inflicted, gangrene from exposure to sun and heat, and painful posture of body, but from the effects of position on the circulation, and other ordinary functions of life.

"The pressure on the aorta must have impeded the free course of the blood, and disabled it from receiving all that furnished by the left ventricle, and thus prevented the blood from the lungs being returned. The pulmonary and other veins and arteries about the heart and chest, must have been congested; increasing greatly bodily suffering.

"The previous night was one of torture and restless fatigue, so that one of the rarest phenomena, a bloody sweat, had been caused. The Saviour likewise was so enfeebled that he could not bear his cross."

Gruner shows the great probability that the wound "was inflicted on the left side, and from below, transversely upwards. Such a stroke must have inflicted a deadly wound. To this moment it is supposed that life faintly remained, otherwise the blood would not have flowed. But this wound which, from the flow of blood and water, was probably in the cavity of the chest, must have been necessarily fatal. In opposition to the adverse declaration, it is shown that the verb *nuttein* is used to denote a mortal wound. In fine, so far from the spices used in embalming, or the close chamber of the tomb being fit restoratives to a person in a trance, they would be the most secure instruments for converting apparent into real death, by suffocation. The time also was not at all sufficient to restore health and strength to a frame which had undergone the shattering tortures of crucifixion."

If medical science forges a weapon sometimes used against religion, the case before us proves that it is susceptible of being wielded yet more efficiently in her defence.

The independent existence, immateriality and immortality, of the soul are Scripture truths, on which medical science has a bearing. Many of the most scientific cultivators of physiological medicine have sustained these truths. By some, however, they have been questioned.

Life is regarded, by these persons, as the result of organization,

and the phenomena of the mind the product of a particular organ, the brain, "as the bile is produced by the liver." Death, usually attended by some physical derangement and change of structure, might appear to sanction such an opinion. But though the phenomena of life should cease universally upon certain physical lesions, this could never prove that life *originated* in the perfection or relations of parts. Clocks disordered in mechanism fail in their office; but is this fact proof that perfectness of structure alone causes them to compute time? can this do more than constitute an adaptation to the end; a fitness to receive a power distinct from itself, which, giving movement to its mechanism the end is attained? So the human mechanism, perfected, is fitted to receive the motive forces of life.

Lawrence, in his physiological lectures, (p. 77.) says, "to call life a property of organization would be unmeaning; would be nonsense." Subsequently, he says, "the component elements of the body, of which nitrogen is a principal one, united in numbers of three, four, or more, easily pass into new combinations. Such a kind of composition is called organization; and as the vital phenomena are only such motions as are consistent with these material arrangements, life is necessarily connected with organization." That which is "necessarily connected with" any thing is "a property" of that thing. Life, therefore, "is a property of organization." That this is Mr. L.'s idea may be farther learned by an examination of the elements of our organization. Take that "principal one, nitrogen." Has *nitrogen* vital properties? Has any other element? It must, then, be from their combination that life arises. But that "life should be the property of organization," is condemned as "unmeaning; nonsense." Because life is only associated with organization, to conclude that, therefore, the union exists by necessity, would be erroneous. That which belongs to a thing by necessity we cannot in idea separate from it. Is it impossible to conceive of a human frame perfectly organized, yet without life? Can we not conceive of a time-piece, with every wheel perfect yet not marking the flight of a second? Can we separate from such mechanism the idea, that except some power independent of itself give movement to its machinery, it will not yield *a tick* till time shall cease? Can we, any more, conceive of a structure formed of such "elements as nitrogen," exhibiting the phenomena of vitality without an impelling power independent of mere organization?

A just answer to these inquiries forbids the belief that "life is necessarily connected with organization."

The same author, after recounting the development of mental phenomena, inquires, "What do we infer from this succession of phenomena?" The existence and action of a principle "wholly distinct from body?" Without entering into a course of reasoning it may be answered, "We infer the existence and action of a principle wholly distinct from body" (matter) in nature, yet in most intimate alliance with it, and using it instrumentally.

It is again said, "the same kind of facts which show the secretions" to be the functions of their respective glands, prove that sensation, perception, memory, judgment, reasoning, thought, "are the animal functions of the central organ of the nervous system." The "facts" connected with the functions of "the glands" and brain widely differ. The glands elaborate their secretions from the blood; will it be said that the brain thus secretes thought, sensibility, and moral feeling! The results of glandular function are all material, those of the brain immaterial. Glandular function is discharged without the intervention of will or consciousness; that of the brain never.

This contrast between the phenomena of organic life and of mind, induces the conclusion that a diversity of nature exists in the cause originating them; and that to organization is not merely added a principle of life regulating animal functions, but a wholly different principle, the source of intellect and moral feeling, the seat of consciousness and will.

If man be destitute of an immortal principle, the physician so often called to witness his humiliating termination, could not but loathe the nature of which he partakes. This feeling so deeply graven on the heart by medicine, denies that man was made to feed the worm alone. Also, when the dart of death has pierced the shield which medicine would interpose before a Newton or a Hunter, and "the silver cord is broken," can the foiled physician feel that a corrupting mass is all that is left of those bright intelligences! that the mind which grasped the heavens, and the genius whose bright halo still encircles medicine, has in a moment, and forever, gone out in darkness? Rejecting such conclusions, medical science, and its most favoured cultivators, sanction the truth that man is possessed of a spirit immaterial and immortal.

To some other Scripture truths, on which medicine has a bearing, we may briefly advert, to show their consistence. That men die,



is a fact universal in extent and coexistent with our race. Why men die, is a question never adequately answered apart from revelation. The reason there assigned is an adequate one, viz., "the appointment of God occasioned by sin." Medicine corroborates this statement by giving no opposing cause.

Apart from the origin of death may be considered its *necessity*. Revelation declares, "it is appointed unto all men once to die." In opposition to this, an "elixir of life" has been sought, and its discovery vaunted. The grave has long since silenced such false pretenders, and medicine, frowning on this folly, sets her seal to the truth of the divine decree. Another universal fact brings medicine and revelation into contact; we refer to the phenomena of human parturition. The pains attendant on human birth stand forth peculiar and alone, whether compared with the parallel phenomena in the lower orders of animals, or with the functions of the organs in the human frame.

Whence this most singular distinction? Revelation says, "It is the work of an offended Deity."

Those who would find another explanation for this fact, attribute much to civilization. Granting all that can be asked as due to this influence, still the solution before given is not invalidated. The important point does not concern the quantity of pain, but its peculiar and universal existence. Another reason has been assigned, (Lawrence, p. 175.) "The human female differs from all other mammalia, in the vagina being turned forward; hence a physical reason is found for that doom under which she labors of bringing forth children in sorrow and pain."

The question at once arises, Has the *fact* here stated the power of a *cause*? Why should the opening "of the vagina forward," rather than backward, produce pain?

If this structure, however, is such as necessarily to beget pain, a question as difficult of solution as the first arises; why this peculiarity? But the fact is, that "the pains" have no connection with the course of the vagina. They belong to the uterus and *os externum*. This reason, therefore, is wholly unsatisfactory, and medicine points to that of revelation as alone conclusive.

The last Scripture statement to which we shall advert, respects the healing of diseases.

Medicine in her peculiar province can only regard these statements as rehearsing matters of fact. Her business is to say whether such cures are explicable on ordinary medical laws.

It is a well known truth that many diseases need neither lengthened time, nor doses of medicine to effect a cure. Powerful influences acting on the nervous system through the imagination or the passions, may produce such a result. This explains many, so called, miraculous cures effected in the heathen and Christian world.

But it is as undeniable a truth, that "one born blind" is not to be cured by imagination; nor "one lame," from a like epoch, to be made through hope or fear, to "leap or walk;" nor can "the deaf and the dumb, and the paralytic," be thus healed; nor "issue of blood be staunched;" nor "palsied arms" be thus restored.

Such cures are related in Scripture as occurring suddenly, and by a word. Medicine declares them explicable only by the power of God. We have now shown that the truths of medical science, taught directly or inferentially, are not opposed to those of revelation. Also, that in such statements of fact, or reasons assigned for the existence of facts, as involved in this science, there exists the most perfect harmony.

Satisfactory as is our examination thus far, room still remains for the inquiry: Does not medical science cherish principles, apart from the truths considered, which war against the precepts of religion?

We believe there is nothing legitimately pertaining to medical science opposed to practical religion. "Does not medicine encourage the violation of the sabbath?" We answer: the lawfulness of healing the sick on the Sabbath is most clearly taught in Scripture. The science, therefore, whose practice demands this, is free from the charge of desecrating holy time. All medical labour on this day is *not* by this sanctioned. Is there not often unnecessary or untimely visiting on the sabbath? May not this, with the frequent absence of the practitioner from the sanctuary, favour the idea that medicine is unfavourable to religion? Another unhappy result flowing from this double cause, relates to the mind of the individual. Absence from the place where the truths and duties of religion are exhibited, with the continued occupancy of the mind by other matters, naturally begets an enfeebled sense of religious things; and this may terminate almost unconsciously in scepticism. This incidental danger, while it is no ground for condemnation of the science, should place upon his guard its assiduous cultivator.

"Is it not true that individuals, to drive off the pangs of disease, or dispel the anxieties of its approach are advised to plunge into



the gaieties of life, or adopt other measures unfitting them to contemplate serious things." That advice of such a tendency is sometimes given may, with regret, be admitted, and still the science be no partner in the guilt. Sound principles cannot be charged with errors due to the head or heart of individuals professing to practice under them.

"Does not medicine teach the concealment of approaching death; thus preventing that preparation for a dying hour which religion enjoins?"

There may be occasions, where the issue of life and death is so nicely balanced as to forbid the subject of religion being thrown into the scale. There may also be cases where, as the bonds uniting soul and body are disrupting, it would be profitless to do so. That there are yet other cases in which the influence of religion would prove happy in every aspect, but yet which are excluded from a dying bed, we greatly fear. The wrong must be charged to erring judgment or feeling, not to the science.

Hear, yet, one other inquiry; "Has not the *practical* influence of medical science been favourable to scepticism; in other words, have not medical men been sceptics?" Though this were true, the cause would not be found, of necessity, in the science. Some lawyers have been sceptics; some statesmen; some moralists; some men of general science; as also those of no profession, no science, no morals, and these last not the least. The reasoning which would make medical science hostile to religion, would place all science in opposition to it. But by parity of reasoning ignorance must yet more decidedly take this position. What proves too much is no proof. Doubtless the truth is that all *hearts*, not all the *sciences*, are opposed to the pure and searching truths of revelation. Science is an ally to religion of which she can never be robbed. Sceptics found in her ranks are those who have not yielded their natural bias to her influence. If the number be larger in that portion allotted to medicine, adequate explanations may be assigned; but none which charge her with disaffection to the cause of religion.

Among these causes may be enumerated:—The *numbers* engaged in medical pursuits; much larger probably than in any other profession.

Also the removal of the practitioner from the peculiar influence of the sabbath.

Medical practice is calculated to *elicit and make public* the sentiments of those engaged in it.



The department of medicine lies nearer that of religion than any other ; hence, feelings favourable or unfavourable, are called into exercise which other professions permit to lie dormant.

Another cause may be found in the obscurity of language used concerning the works and operations of the Deity. Medicine has to do with man, the most "fearful and wonderful" work of God, the "image of himself." In this study we would expect to see the Creator as in a mirror brightly reflected. He is so.

In the teaching of this science we would expect oftentimes to be pointed to him. This also is true. Our difficulty respects the manner in which this is most usually done. The student of medicine is often called on to bring his gift, and deposit it, like the Athenian, on the altar of an "unknown God." A cloudy image, entitled "nature," is raised in the mind, to which high attributes of power, wisdom, and goodness are often ascribed.

Such language is objectionable, because there is no word more vaguely used, in medicine or language generally, than this. They who employ the word, attach a meaning to it or they do not. If to them it is meaningless, what idea can it convey to the minds of others? If it has a meaning, why not abandon the cloud-begetting word?

Shall we inquire what it means ; whether that material insensate creation around us ; or whether the idea is aught connected with the feminine gender so frequently employed ; or whether it means "a something, but we know not what ;" or does it not mean, and point us to, a supreme intelligence, to God ? If so, how happy will be the influence of this idea, so pervading all the walks of medicine, when *no more eclipsed by the dark shadow of a doubtful name*. These, and like reasons, show how the charge of scepticism may be applied to medical men without involving the science. But the charge, as applicable to them, may be made all too broad.

Many names, venerated as luminaries in medicine, are scarcely less dear to religion. Beside the men of other days, the highest teachers in the schools of Dublin, Edinburgh, and London, are the firm advocates of revelation. Some physicians are public teachers in religion as well as in medicine ; more are its private professors. In our own land, there are many whose brilliant medical reputation sparkles in the golden setting of Christian virtue. Of these the number is not small, who, when the high duties of professional instruction are fulfilled, descend from their proud eminence, and become humble disciples in the things of their holy religion. The offices of physician and minister of

religion are not unfrequently blended in Christian lands, still more commonly in missionary labor. The inspired penman of two of the books of Scripture, is there entitled "Luke, the beloved physician." Could eminent private practitioners and public teachers of medicine, together with ministers, missionaries, and inspired writers, have thus allied medicine and religion together, had there not subsisted between them sweet harmony? Above all, if medical science joined hands with scepticism, would the great author of Christianity have shadowed forth himself and work under the emblem of the physician and his office! While we behold him daily "going about doing good," causing the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk; restoring the withered arm, raising the paralytic from his couch, cleansing the leper, and raising the dead, we must yield to the conviction that the physician and his science are no legitimate enemies to the pure, benevolent, and divinely enlightened religion of JESUS CHRIST.

From this examination of the inquiry "*Is medical science favourable to scepticism,*" we feel warranted in the following conclusions:—

Medicine, as a science, has never been opposed to religion.

If medical men have ever been thus opposed, very different sentiments are now becoming prevalent.

Ere long, the powerful and zealous allies of revelation will be medicine—her pupils, teachers, and practitioners.

May this University, the earliest and brightest source of medical light in the western world, increase the splendour of her reputation, and the richness of her blessings, by leading on in this just and holy influence!